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WE WANT OUR HOMES AND FARMSTEADS BEAUTIFUL

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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A radio discussion among Wakelin McNeel, Assistant State Club Leader, Viola M. Gunnison, County Home Agent, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Annette Lohuis and Melvin Raeder, 4-H Club members, Sheboygan, broadcast Saturday, July 3, 1937, in the National 4-H Club Radio Hour, by NBC and associated stations.

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ANNOUNCER:

Hello Club Members, Leaders and Friends:

Club work now is about 23 years old, officially. It has grown to be a rather robust lad. It has been matured by some of the finest sentiment that ever stirred the ambition and heart strings of young people. It has grown in numbers until now it involves over a 1,000,000 rural young people, and 70,000 adults who guide them. Not only has it grown at a tremendous rate in numbers, but it has grown in it's influence toward making life more abundant for farm boys and girls. It includes now in it's work not only production and utilization of farm produce - the bread and butter side of life - but includes in its program such things as music, art, nature appreciation, beautification of the home, growing of flowers and shrubs and trees, and other similar activities that give color and joy to life. Any leader of boys and girls has made himself immortal who has helped youth find an appreciation of the commonest things in his environment; to discover the glory of the picture gallery of the skies-the clouds; or to witness with a sense of curiosity the transformation of the worm, creeping in the dust, to that marvel in the blue - the butterfly. Any boy or girl who witnesses with deep appreciation this scene, or similar ever-present scenes in nature, will unconsciously say to himself "God give me courage to trust. I can break my chrysalis too!"

Well, we have two young people here today, 4-H club members, who have come to learn the joys of the outdoors, and who have carried the beauty of the outdoors to their own homes. I have visited the homes of both these club members and because they radiated their enthusiasm to me, and their plans sounded so sensible, I felt sure that they might be a help and inspiration to our 4-H listeners today. Melvin, I am going to ask you to come to the microphone first. This is Melvin Raeder, from Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, a stocky farm lad, a tree planter, who has assisted in making his home surroundings very attractive. Melvin, as I remember, you planted a windbreak.

MELVIN:

That's right. Our house was exposed to the cold winter winds. Very often, around our family table, we talked about planting a windbreak. You see, my parents are German and I guess I inherited their love for trees so when I learned that planting a windbreak was a project in 4-H club work, I joined and signed up for the trees.

MR. MCNEEL:

Did you buy the trees? If not, how did you get them?

MELVIN:

No, the trees were furnished free to me by our State Conservation Depart-

(over)

ment, provided I promised to follow instructions in location of the planting places and in planting the trees.

MR. MCNEEL:

You had everything to gain in a proposition like that.

MELVIN:

You do in Club Work - you gain in experience even though you may not always win. Sounds funny, but it is true. Of course, it was understood that my windbreak would be a demonstration windbreak.

MR. MCNEEL:

What do you mean by a demonstration windbreak?

MELVIN:

Well, that's the kind of a windbreak that folks might come to to find out how to plant a windbreak, what kind of trees to plant, how far apart one should plant them, how fast the trees grow, and other information that anyone who plans to plant a windbreak should have.

MR. MCNEEL:

So you are a demonstrator of the right way to plant a windbreak, Melvin?

MELVIN:

In a real sense, isn't every club member a demonstrator? He studies how to do his work in the very best way and the results declare to his little world how far he was right. Besides planting a windbreak, I have planted a shelter belt for our farm orchard. This shelter belt is made up of a couple rows of evergreen trees planted to protect the apple trees from the force of the prevailing winds. I don't like to see the trees in an orchard all bent over by the force of the prevailing winds.

MR. MCNEEL:

What created this keen interest you have in trees and the outdoors?

MELVIN:

I suppose my Dad is as much responsible as any one. He is a devoted conservationist. He owns a small part of the Sheboygan Marsh and has always worked to make the whole marsh a great bird refuge. A boy can't live under the enthusiasm of a Dad like that without catching the same enthusiasm.

MR. MCNEEL:

Have you secured the results hoped for?

MELVIN:

I should say I have - and more. I planted pines and spruces - the kind that are evergreen and always growing - the kind that keep out the wintry winds. They grow slowly - that's one reason why trees are precious. But as I get older, the trees will get bigger. One should look ahead; club members learn to do this. But already that windbreak has added beauty to our home place. I didn't think so much about the beauty side when I planted the trees.

MR. MCNEEL:

Home means a bit more to you now, I imagine, after this experience.

MELVIN:

I know it does. Whenever people come to our home, the first thing they see and inquire about is that windbreak, unless it is my Mother's flower garden.

MR. MCNEEL:

Does your Mother find time to care for flowers?

MELVIN:

One can always find time to do the things he really wants to do.

The whole family pitches in, my brothers, sisters and Dad. We do not look upon the time as hours lost. Really they are the best spent hours of the year.

ANNETTE:

I have visited Melvin's home and it is an inspiration to see what has been done. Never before did I realize so clearly that it is a real neighborly act to have a well kept farm lawn. One who plants flowers and shrubs and trees lives for others besides himself.

MR. MCNEEL:

That was Annette Lohuis, also of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, another member of our radio team at the studio today.

ANNETTE:

And I've come here to tell 4-H club members that they are missing out on one of the greatest home joys that can come to them when they fail to plan how to landscape their yards, and then carry out those plans. Every clothing club girl knows the joys that come in planning a dress, buying the material, cutting out the cloth, sewing, fitting and all; each step toward the completed garment brings a joyous sense of pride. Well, we feel that same pride, but to a larger degree, in improving the home grounds.

MR. MCNEEL:

You make your own landscaping plans, do you?

ANNETTE:

Yes, our club material explains certain principles like framing the doorway, foundation planting, kinds of shrubs to use and the like. We study these with respect to our grounds, then we go ahead and make our plans. These plans are examined by the extension specialist. He may make revisions and suggestions, then we are ready to do some planting. Each year we plant as many shrubs and trees as we can afford until we plant all the plan calls for.

MR. MCNEEL:

"Plan your work, then work out your plan" is a good policy in landscaping as well as in anything else.

ANNETTE:

That's right. My parents have always taken an interest in the farm yard. They like flowers and trees but they had been planted every-which-way. As a



result the whole lawn is a rather cluttered arrangement of trees and shrubs. Some people say you can't misplace a rosebush, but I think you can. So I asked my parents for the job of improving the arrangement. A large mulberry tree hid the front door, for instance, and it didn't have the welcome that the doorway should have. Well, that mulberry tree was our first point of discussion. Dad had climbed it's trunk and hung from it's branches when a boy and there was much sentiment attached to that tree.

MR. MCNEEL:

It's rather hard to disturb a tree like that.

ANNETTE:

Well, Dad acknowledged it was old and should come out. So he dug it out. The interesting part about this whole undertaking is that no longer is this my project but the whole family's. In the evening after the chores are done, the whole family can be seen working to get the lawn in shape. Even little brother with his small wagon hauls dirt to fill up depressions in the lawn.

MR. MCNEEL:

One time you won a trip to a Conservation Camp in Wisconsin, because of your work with wild flowers. Are you doing anything along that line now?

ANNETTE:

Yes, I've learned the growing habits of many wild flowers and transplanted many of the most attractive ones on my own home grounds. I've learned what kind of soil they need, their light and shade requirements and have tried to establish those conditions in nooks and corners.

MR. MCNEEL:

Do you think it's a wise thing to encourage club members to transplant wildlings from the woods?

ANNETTE:

Of course, they must know the conditions necessary for their growth, just as I mentioned a moment ago. But that is what club work teaches us after all. All our flowers and shrubs were once wildlings that have been domesticated and improved.

MR. MCNEEL:

That's an interesting story, Annette. Now I am going to ask you a hard question. Do you think that beautifying the home grounds makes for happier home life?

ANNETTE:

It surely does. That's the real purpose in making your home grounds attractive. The work created a pride in home surroundings, a loyalty and contentment that cannot be felt where there is no beauty. I know that some times I can hardly wait to get home, don some old clothes and work at some plan for improving parts of the yard. My friends, too feel a warmer welcome because of this family content. And another thing has happened to me since I started this work. I enjoy other lawns more than ever before. Yes, I know that it takes a "heap of living and work and sacrifice to make a place a home" but it cannot be a real home without them.

MR. MCNEEL:

That is real good philosophy Annette. It takes a "heap o' livin' in a house to call it home". Guess you can't get away from that. Where there is no sacrifice there is no love. Now, Melvin, I am going to ask you a practical question. You look like a practical fellow and this is the question - will these creations of beauty which you and other club members are making, by co-operating with nature, add any value to your property - I mean in dollars and cents?

MELVIN:

If one must be practical about it, the fact is that a well planted farmstead adds actual dollars to the worth of any farm in the eyes of a buyer. That windbreak of mine is adding dollars each year to the value of our farm. By the time I am forty, it will have increased the value of our farm by one-thousand dollars. And all the time we have had the joy and comfort it provides. Does that answer your question?

MR. MCNEEL:

Couldn't be answered any better, Melvin. We have the leader with our group here at the studio. She has been a strong influence and a great help to the club members in Sheboygan County. I am going to ask her to add a few words to our story. Miss Viola Gunnison.

MISS GUNNISON:

I want to say that I've found that most farm boys and girls are interested in improving their home surroundings. Often the expense of buying trees and shrubs keeps them from doing this work. We try to make it easier by having club members draw plans, get them approved and then add a few shrubs and a tree or two each year as the plan calls for. This reduces the burden over the years. Another plan that is universally practiced in Wisconsin takes care of this expense obstacle very well. Club members buy small shrubs, a year or two old, called lining out stock, of the kinds the plan calls for. They plant and care for these shrubs in a garden nursery for a couple of years. After that time they are large enough to be planted in their permanent place on the lawn. That plan of work reduces the expense and at the same time provides a real education in nursery practices.

I work with farm women as well as with boys and girls. It has become rather fashionable to study the fine things in art in farm women's clubs. This is certainly a fine thing. But after all, whoever owns a few square yards of soil and knows how to plant a flower, a shrub, a tree, can rival all the masters in the creation of true beauty. The greatest art opportunity belongs to those fortunate enough to live on farms.

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